# FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume 37, No. 5 October 1986

# TRANSFORMATION

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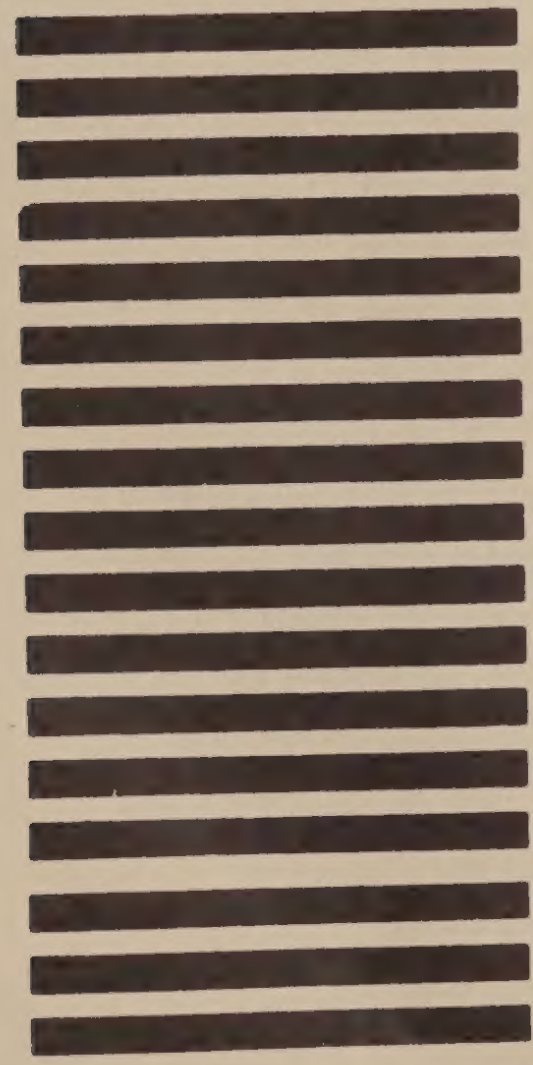

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# FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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## TO OUR READERS:

The articles in this edition of "Fellowship in Prayer" have to do with different aspects of the transformation process. Ann Walsh writes from the Jungian point of view about changes in consciousness and attitudes brought about by the discovery of meaning. Rabbi Roy Walter suggests that personal growth will follow from a disciplined practice of prayer. An author who wishes to remain anonymous shares with us the story of the total metamorphosis he underwent, spiritually, physically, and psychologically, when he gave up a dependency. An interview with Princeton cardiologist William F. Haynes reveals a pattern of life-long faith development resulting from unwavering Christian commitment. And Valerie Condon describes from the perspective of the "unchurched" how contact with God leads to beauty and fullness of life.

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The theme of transformation is becoming a permanent part of "Fellowship in Prayer." As of the present issue, we are beginning a new feature called "A Transforming Experience," which means a spiritual experience that had a significant outcome in the world, for the good of a person, a number of people, or an institution. We are printing in this edition two examples. "Eagle's Wings" comes from a young teacher whose character was profoundly changed by the death of a student. "Awakening Behind The Walls" relates how an intensive journal-retreat helped a prisoner to take a giant step toward forgiveness and peace. These stories make the point that a spiritual experience is not a sterile, narcissistic event, or an end in itself, but is, instead, a meaningful, purposeful gift with strings attached. Spiritual experience brings with it the obligation to work for the transformation of society, or, at least, to change oneself.

We invite you to send us your descriptions of your own transforming moments. We will be happy to read them and will print as many as we can in future editions of "Fellowship in Prayer."

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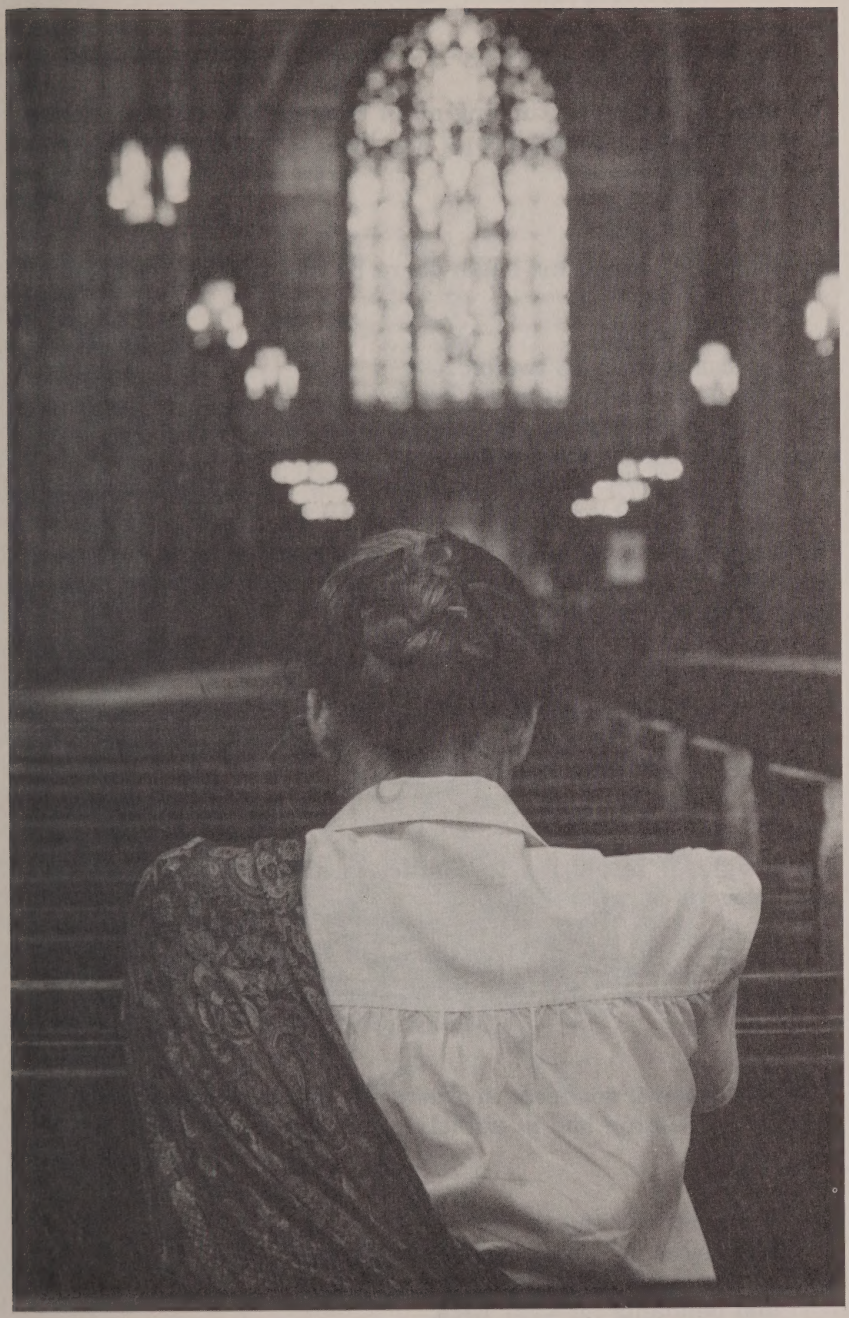
You will notice that we have inserted into this issue a Reader Survey in which we ask you for your response to our publication. We would be deeply grateful to you if you would take a moment to answer our questions and return the form to us. No postage is required.



## INSIGHTS

The process is not the turning of an oyster shell, but the turning around of a soul passing from a day little better than night to the true day of being.

*Plato*

My guide . . . turned his head where he had had his feet before.

*Dante*

The mind is said to be twofold:
the pure and also the impure;
Impure — by connection with desire;
pure, by separation from desire.

*Maitri Upahishad*

There are two ways: one is to expand your ego to infinity, and the other is to reduce it to nothing, the former by knowledge, and the latter by devotion.

*Swami Ramdas*

And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

*Romans 12.2*

The insightful resolution to conflict is always a gift that takes awareness by surprise.

*James Loder*

God becomes as we are, that we may become as God is.

*William Blake*

When we discover goodness in others, we should imitate it; when we perceive something bad in ourselves, we should get rid of it.

*Chinese saying*

Hear your father's instruction,
and reject not your mother's teaching,
for they are a fair garland for your head,
and pendants for your neck.

*Proverbs 8-9*

# 坐禪圖

坐久忘所知忽覺月在地
泠泠天風來豁然到肝脇
俯視一泓水澄澄無物敵
中有錢鮮遊默默自相契

無事此靜坐一日如兩日
若活七十年便是百四十
靜坐少思寡欲養心養氣存神
此是脩真要訣學者可以書紳

# ON FINDING MEANING — A JUNGIAN VIEW

*by Anne Batterberry Walsh*

C.G. Jung wrote that the awareness of being linked to something infinite is necessary in order to avoid being ensnared in futilities and banalities, or following goals of no real importance and thus becoming stagnant and zestless. Without such an awareness we are prone to laying false claims about ourself and to identifying with possessions that are not really ours, such as "our" talent or beauty. For Jung, the really telling question of life was: is one related — or not — to something infinite? Only when we are aware of this link with the essential we embody is satisfaction found in life. Jung recognized that "man cannot stand a meaningless life." "Meaning makes a great many things endurable," he said, "perhaps everything."

The sense of the infinite — of meaning — is obtained only in the here and now; in this particular moment, and within the boundaries and limitations of our finite selves. Only when we are aware both of our uniqueness and of the limitation of self can we also have the capacity for becoming conscious of the infinite. The sense of connection with the infinite — with meaning — can only be felt. It cannot be arrived at by reason. Reason, the rational, tends to pooh-pooh, to dismiss these experiences as "nothing-but". Often, when we feel the beginning glimmers and stirring of meaning — things that cannot be concretely validated — we slap at them like mosquitos. Sometimes we have these glimmerings in what we consider to be unlikely or even unseemly situations. Because they don't fit into this or that thought or belief system, we brush them away. When we disavow the validity of our own experiences, however, we deny our own true selves. The psyche has reality. Although we cannot prove that there is such a thing as meaning, or soul, or self, or God, our felt experience of the ineffable has validity. Jung, in his old age, wrote, "There is nothing

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*Anne Batterberry Walsh is a psychotherapist in private practice in Princeton, New Jersey, and a candidate at the C.G. Jung Institute of New York.*

*by Anne Batterberry Walsh*

I am quite sure of....[yet], in spite of all uncertainties, I feel a solidity underlying all existence and a continuity in my mode of being."

These feelings, awareness, awakenings are what are called in Zen "a finger pointing at the moon." They are not the moon itself. What follows are examples of "fingers pointing at the moon." — they are soul-stories; some told to me in my role as psychotherapist, some by friends. Some are from my own life. These stories belong to the story-tellers who have granted permission to let others "hear" them. These are personal myths — myths in Mircia Eliade's sense of "stories that are sacred, exemplary, significant." Each of these experiences was a bringer of felt meaning.

The experience of the transmission of the sense of mystery, awe, and timelessness was told to me by a photographer who, sometime back, had come across pictures of cave paintings.

> "That palm print white in the dark depths of the cave speaks to me more than anything. Some person put his hand in that place six or seven thousand years ago. It meant something to him — it had to — the white hand is too far up the wall to be accidental. It's inexplicable — but it means something."

A symbolic act taken by a particular person in a particular moment continues to transmit felt meaning — an interrelatedness transcending time, connecting us with something infinite. This mythic act — the placing of the hand print on a wall — continues to stir, enliven, and awaken psychic energy. It is an expression of the mystery that transcends the ego, surpassing the rational.

A sense of the infinite often is experienced by young children. "I was four, perhaps. I had this intense feeling of mortality-immortality, unity with the whole, everything in the entire universe; yet also a powerful sense of being myself. My feet were solid on the stone porch, the crickets and cicadas sang crazily, loudly. I remember vividly there was the redness of my dress, so red that it could never be forgotten, and the whirl of the green world around me. Others were in the garden laughing, playing, unaware of what was happening. This experience lasted a moment — an eternity."

Here, the experience of unity with all creation in a very concrete moment of early childhood has continued to be both touchstone and well-spring over the years in the life of a woman now entering her fifties. A life punctuated by difficult losses, disruptions, and recurring depression — this early religious experience continues to mediate the feeling of a "solidity underlying all life."

Aniela Jaffe, a close associate of Jung, wrote that meaning is the experience of totality. It includes the reality lived in time as well as life's quality of timelessness. It involves the realm that transcends the tangible and conscious world as well as personal conscious experience. The tension of these opposites is necessary for life to be lived with intensity. Without the tension of opposites life is stagnant

and stale. "Meaning is the psychological state that can affirm life." (Edward Edinger, Jungian analyst)

Meaning, soul, or religious experience can often be found in situations seemingly opposite to what is usually considered to be "divine;" in the grotesque and sometimes in the generally despised.

The photographer also related the following:

> "I have always been drawn to carnivals — the small, sad kind that go to little backwater towns. In North Carolina I went to one with Sarah — we went to the freak show. There was a hermaphrodite wearing a pink 1950s prom dress and a tired crinoline tiara. Her...his face was tired, old, and deeply furrowed. He/she talked a bit and for a dollar you could go back and she'd "reveal proof of being both a man and a woman." Sarah didn't go, but I did. As the hermaphrodite lifted her skirts she talked more. She spoke about her children — a son, a dentist in Omaha — another, a lawyer — and grandchildren. People were hooting and whistling. Her eyes looked off somewhere else. Somehow there was such a dignity — something — so powerful."

The photographer's recognition of the transcendent, the dignity and suffering in this man/woman living life as a side show freak, moves but also shocks us, shaking up our assumptions and prejudices. It brings to mind the biblical statement, "In the least ye shall find me."

The transcendent can also be dicovered in the midst of alienation. Hannah, a woman in her thirties, told me of a recent, transforming experience.

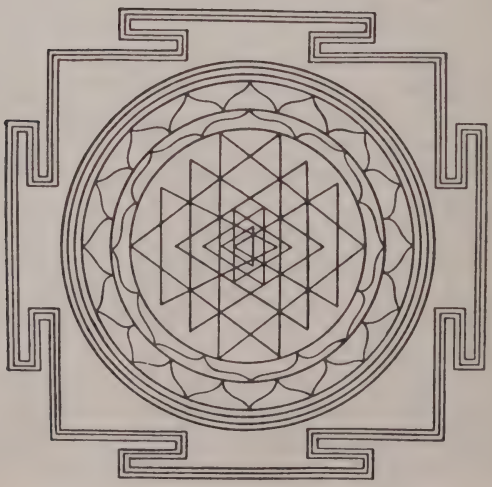
> "My father and I, as long as I can remember, have been unable to talk to each other without falseness or anger. Last week we saw for the first time an old, long-lost movie of me as a baby with my father and mother, whom I can barely recall, she died so long ago. Everybody looked so young and happy — like a real family; so unlike how my father and I lived after mom's illness and death. After seeing the film both my father and I were feeling so much — the intolerable loss not just of my mother but of a way of being — being happy, liking each other — and so much else. I felt I would explode with all that was stirred up. Our silence as my father drove me home was so loud that it boomed. Then, out of nowhere, a black storm gathered. Violent blinding rain, shot through with great bolts of lightning, bombarded the car. All the inexpressable explosive feelings we could never speak of were spoken for us. We remained silent — every thing had been said for us.

After this experience, the teller of this living myth felt a great decrease in anger and resentment toward her father as well as toward others. The story illustrates what the ancients called "the sympathy of all nature" — what Jung called synchronicity.

The myth and the symbol are living things that release and transform the psychic energy that heals and makes whole. Jung saw that in our psyches there is an inner drive toward wholeness or completeness.

Joseph Campbell, the eminent scholar of mythology, finds the foremost and most distinctive function of myth to be the "eliciting and supporting sense of awe before the mystery of being". Jung believed that we pay too little attention and respects to the mythic side. For both individual and global healing there needs to be a shift away from overdependence on the rational. Our dreams, stirrings, imagination, and works of art abound with the symbolic. What is desired is a conscious dialogue between the ego and energy symbols from the unconscious (the unconscious includes all that is unknown to us both in the personal and transpersonal realms). The unconscious that can be terrifying and destructive when ignored is a living well and treasure house when we pay attention and enter into this dialogue. We need both consciousness and the irrational (I prefer the term a-rational to irrational) in tension and in union and at play with each other for there to be transformation, as well as felt meaning.

Jung pointed out that both meaning and meaninglessness exist in life and cherished the hope that "meaning would preponderate and win the battle." For Jung, life is only lived when it is the touchstone of spirit.



*In the fleeting moment between wanting to pray and really praying, a choice of immense significance is made: we decide to either come closer to God, or move further away. In this practical article, a rabbi offers concrete suggestions as to how we can make the wiser choice.*

# "MY WORDS FLY UP, MY THOUGHTS REMAIN BELOW

*by Roy A. Walter*

You may recall this scene from Hamlet. Two scenes after his *"To be or not to be"* soliloquy, Hamlet comes upon his uncle kneeled in prayer. Resolved now to slay him to avenge his father's death, he says, "Now might I do it pat, now he's praying. And now I'll do it."

But just as he is about to slay him, he stops. He realizes something. According to Christian theology at that time, the soul of someone who dies in prayer goes straight to heaven, no matter what sins he may have committed. So Hamlet stays his hand, because to kill his uncle now would be to save him rather than damn him. He leaves the stage resolved to find another time more appropriate for his purpose.

No sooner has Hamlet left the stage, than his uncle speaks two lines vibrating with irony. "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go." The irony is that though he is bowed in prayer position with hands folded, he is not praying. He is merely going through the motions and mouthing the words. Had Hamlet slain his uncle at that moment, his soul would not have gone to heaven; his father's death would have been avenged.

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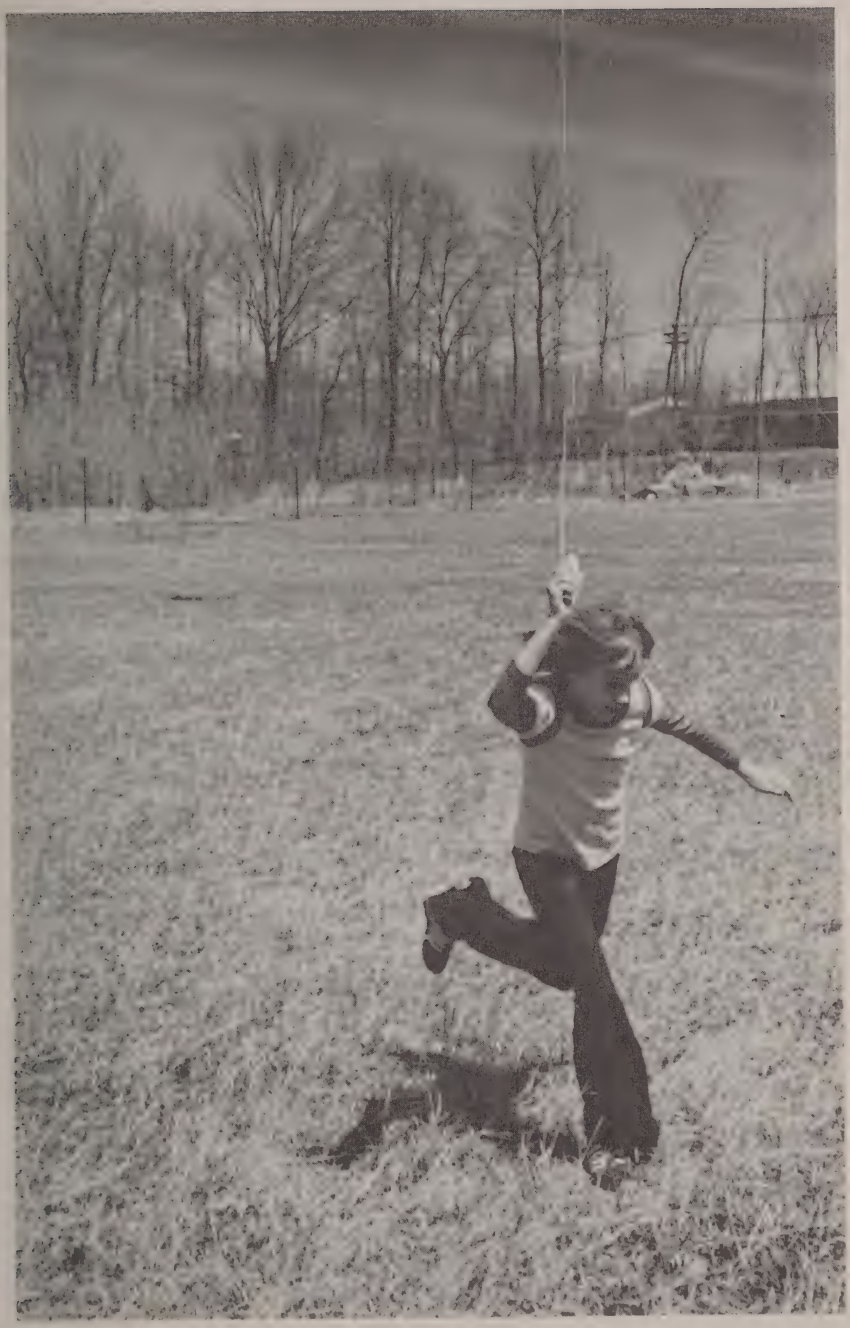
*Roy A. Walter, the Senior Rabbi at Temple Emanu El in Houston, Texas, holds numerous offices and serves on many boards in his area. He holds degrees from Tulane University, the Hebrew Union College, and the Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati.*



Let me ask you a question. I promise, there's no one standing behind you with drawn sword and your salvation is not at stake, so answer yourself honestly. How many of you could answer *yes* to the question, did you pray today?

If your answer was either *no* or *I'm not sure,* you're probably not as out of step with the rest of the world as you might think. Contemporary Americans, despite all the talk of religious renewal and the articles on religious revival and interest in spirituality, are about as uncomfortable with the notion of prayer as we can be.

In fact, for large numbers of Americans, prayer is not something we put much stock in in the first place. Except in those famous "foxhole" times in life, most every study shows that we don't find prayer a meaningful word in our vocabulary and spend little if any time praying. Even coming to religious services is often more of a statement of community than it is of prayer. This doesn't mean you aren't making a religious statement. However, the statement may not be to God so much as it is to yourselves and your neighbors.

Now this doesn't mean that Americans don't want to pray and don't have spiritual longings. Because those same surveys reveal that Americans do have a desire for some kind of prayer experience; it's just that they rarely seem to be able to have one. They envy people who do and wish they could. But something gets in their way, consistently. So pervasive is this that many contemporary prayerbooks, including our own *Gates of Prayer,* often talk more about the difficulty of praying than the sureness of it.

I would like to spend a little time talking to you about this phenomenon. And in the end even offer some thoughts on how we Americans might deal with our difficulties.

I think it helpful to be aware that difficulty with praying is not unique to 20th century America. Despite what many people think, it's a timeless human problem. Not only is the literature of contemporary religion filled with discussion about this issue; so is the Bible. The Psalms in particular derive much of their power from dealing with this problem. Psalm 10: "Why do you stand far off, Lord? Why do you hide Yourself in times of trouble?" Psalm 13: "How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?" Psalm 35 asks not to be rebuked by God, and Psalm 102 asks that God not hide His face in time of distress. *The sense of not being heard, of speaking into an abyss abounds.*

And if you read the religious writers through the centuries, all of them deal with the issue. The sense of being frustrated, of trying and not being able to pray, fills their writings. Some of them blame themselves; some blame God. Some of them vow never to be put off from praying by its difficulty; others are ready to give up. But most of them, from the early church fathers and the Rabbis, through the

Middle Ages and into modern times, speak of the difficulty of praying. It is not a problem unique to our time. Those who find it difficult to pray are in pretty good company.

Second, the formal worship service itself frequently comes under attack. It is accused of getting in the way of a personal sense of piety, of not being inspiring. This is no newer an accusation than the difficulty of prayer. It is a dominant theme of many prophetic texts, often quoted by early Reform Judaism in its battle to throw off much of the form and return somehow to a purer sense of religiosity. Ironically, the Chassidim, who have become in a sense more Orthodox than the Orthodox, began by casting off the formality of the worship service. You may recall the famous Chassidic story about the little boy who cannot read the prayers but knows the alphabet. One Yom Kippur he opens the gates of heaven by praying the letters and letting God put them together into the right words.

Community prayer services, though a powerful force in the religious life of all Western religions, have always created problems for their adherents. Such worship has been accused through the centuries of being stodgy, uninspiring, stylized, rigid, and restrictive.

Third, many people define their religious identity much more in terms of the values by which they live their lives than by the number of times they pray, whether in community worship or privately. Often they point to a person whose life may be filled with prayer, but who then walks out into the street and has no compunction about hating or stealing.

Again, such accusations are not new. The prophetic texts from Amos and Hosea which address this phenomenon abound, and indeed were quoted widely and extensively by early Reform Judaism and making many of the changes it made. And in Christianity, from Jesus to and through the Protestant Reformation, the same exact patterns can be found.

Finally, I think the bottom line for many Americans may be a genuine skepticism about the efficacy of prayer in the first place. Being raised in a rational system of education, being taught that proof is something that must be measurable, we want some kind of acceptable evidence that prayer is effective. Prayer being a non-rational exercise, there is a natural conflict between what we are raised to be and what prayer is or is not. We are not easily convinced.

This too, by the way, is not unheard of in history. Ours is not the only age to put more stock in the intellectual than in the spiritual. Not the first generation to presume the preeminence of the human mind and achievement. Though the Bible speaks scornfully of such people, its attack on them indicated that they existed in biblical days and had powerful enough voice to force the biblical authors to write about them. Science, whatever we may think of former eras' definition of it, has always been at odds with faith, else the Catholic Church

through the centuries would not have attempted with such intensity to monitor and control it. And in today's world, one has but to turn on the television and listen to many of the fundamentalist preachers whose primary weapon against humanism and science is name-calling to realize its power in today's life.

In fact, I suppose the issue today, even more primary than the efficacy of prayer may be the definition of prayer. What does it mean in the first place? Not reciting the ritual but having the experience.

You know there is a wonderful story of the little boy who was misbehaving in church. After putting up with his noise for a while his father finally picked him up by the waist, put him over his arm and was carrying him outside. The church became quiet as everyone watched, thankful for the father's action. As they got to the door, the little boy called out, "Y'all pray for me now, y' hear."

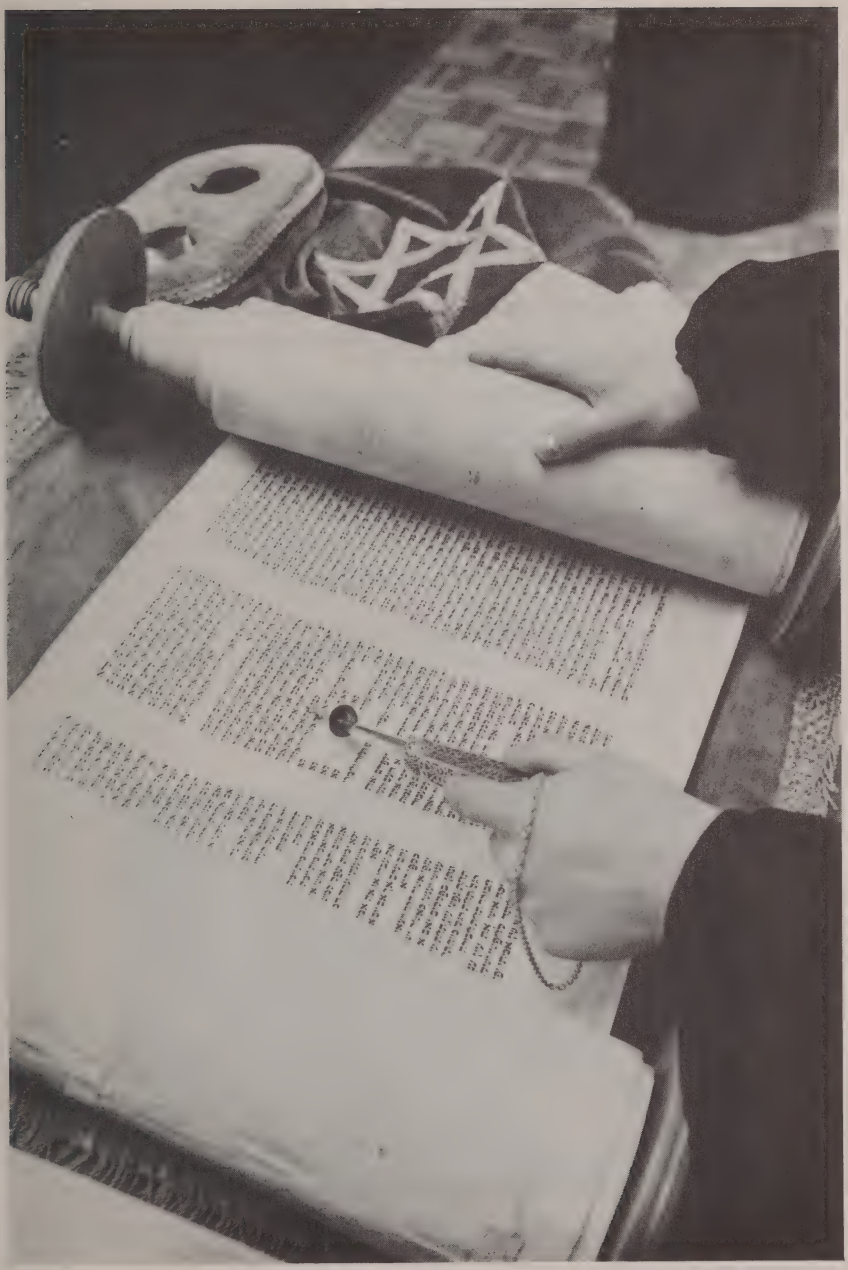
That little boy, for all his poor behavior, knew exactly what he meant by the word pray. How many of us do? When I asked at the beginning whether you prayed tonight, I bet many of you pondered what it really meant to have prayed. Study after study of the contemporary American reveals that few of us have had meaningful prayer experiences as adults, that we're not really sure what it would mean to have one. The best many of us can do is recall some special moments when we were teen-agers that we identified then as prayer, but we're no longer sure what it means. And so either we don't try to pray or, like the King in Hamlet, when we try to pray, our words fly up but our thoughts remain below. We go through the motions with no real results.

Somewhere along the way, you probably have found yourself if you are at all typical. The question is, what can we do? What can we do for ourselves. Because I believe with great intensity that many, many of those who have never had the experience of prayer would like to. I have some suggestions, ones interestingly that I found myself giving earlier today.

First, and this is a big step for many of us since it isn't quantifiable, we have to accept about ourselves that we have within us the capacity to pray. Many people are embarassed to admit it to themselves, much less talk about it with others. But beginning with the acceptance that we have the need and ability is the first step.

The second is not to wait for the "foxhole" before we try to pray. There is something to having the habit of praying. For those who prefer there is always the daily minyan at one of the synagogues. But I have in mind more private prayer at your bedside each day. Perhaps with a book, perhaps not. It can be as simple as, "Thank you, God, for this new day and for being alive to enjoy it." Or as you go to sleep to thank God for the day just passed.

Third, don't be discouraged if nothing happens for a while. You can't reach your goal with the first step. Be patient. Take your time.



Don't be dismayed if it takes a while to get the rhythm of prayer. Even for those who have been at it for a long time, the prayer experience doesn't take place every time you try to pray. And sometimes it takes you by surprise. Just when you feel the least successful and the least inspired, a word or phrase can jump out at you and grab you literally by the soul and send a shiver through you. Suddenly when you expect it least you can be overcome with awe.

Finally, *don't give up.* You know, I talk to people all the time whose tenacity literally thrills me. Their ability to hang in there, to stick with it, to persevere even when discouraged, are admirable beyond words. They know that without that holding on, they will never succeed. And so whether it's raising kids or building a business or trying to put something together, they grab ahold and don't let go, because they want it.

This is no less true of prayer than anything else in life worth having. If you want it, you have to be committed. You have to not let go. If you simply admire those who can pray, you will never achieve it. But if it's something you want for yourself, then you have to be prepared to work for it and hold onto your desire. I cannot convince you it is worth it; no one can. I can only share with you my own experience and that of others that it is "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

May this hour of prayer unite our words and our thoughts bringing them and us closer to God. Ken y'hi ratson. Amen.

## BUILDING BLOCKS

*by Judith Settle*

Pushed,
I fall backward.

Tripped,
I slide sideways.

Loved,
I stand.

## TRANSPLANT

Behind my house
easy to spot daffodils
gleam through the woods.

Uprooted in a yard cleansing,
they beckon me.
I walk to them
and pick a swaying stem.

Against my palm
golden scented trumpet
merges with yellow washed petals
iridescent in sun's glow.

It blends into my hand.
I, too, have found
a new home.

---

*Judith Settle, who lives in North Carolina, writes poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. Her work has appeared in numerous religious publications and literary reviews.*

# SURRENDERING

Bill W. knew, from days and nights, weeks and months of talks with his co-founder, Dr. Bob of Akron, and with other alcoholics who were testing out the tangled paths to sobriety, that three conditions had to exist before any addicted drunk could even begin to hope for recovery. These were — and still are — (A) a passionate desire to stop drinking; (B) a capacity to search relentlessly for truth within one's self that would erase forever the self-deception and the lying to others that had characterized one's drinking career; and (C) at least a tiny crack in each alcoholic's deceptive ego armor that assures him (or her) that he (or she) could reach that goal **ALONE.**

If Bill, and ultimately his followers, encountered an alcoholic who could, without reservations of any kind, meet these conditions, they felt they had a chance to rebuild a life. They had learned that the poor, ego-centered cripple, who merely wanted to diminish his drinking to escape the yammering of a carping spouse, couldn't make it. Nor could the devotee of self-pity who blamed his excessive drinking on his wife, his children, his boss, the weather or the Internal Revenue Service — but never on himself. They learned that only rarely could they hammer into the thick skull of a bull-headed drunk who had failed to quit drinking a score of times ALONE the simple fact that he could do it if he would only seek help from a power greater than himself.

The two biggest stumbling blocks to recovery then were — and still are — the human propensity for self-deception, refusal to face the facts, and monumental egos that would induce one to drown rather than demonstrate weakness by calling for help.

In my brief span of my experience with Alcoholics Anonymous, I've encountered several who flunked on these conditions. Sad to say, they do drown well before their time. So Bill set to work on codifying a program that could *work* for people who were ready to work at it themselves. He wrote twelve steps. Let me give you a few samples.

**STEP ONE:** "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable." It's called a step and for some it's just that. For others, it's an 18-foot chainlink fence with four feet of barbed wire on top of that. For many, far too many — sad to say — it proves to be impossible, and the disease proceeds inexorably to its agonizing termination. Pity. But solid proof that an ego that refuses to surrender self-destructs.

**STEP TWO:** "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." Here's a bundle of fish-hooks. Power is spelled with a capital P and clearly means a deity of some sort. That will rattle the non-believer even if he's reassured that there's a door open for him too, but later. But how about that phrase: "return to sanity"? Do they really mean I was nuts? Maybe still am?

**STEP THREE:** "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him.*" That step, even with its softening final clause prudently added by Bill W., knocked me flatter than downing chug-a-lug a quart of one hundred proof vodka. Impossible! Nonsense! I wouldn't, couldn't accept it.

I make no apologies whatever for becoming autobiographical at this point. The whole purpose of my being here this morning is to attempt to explain to old friends, and new, how a card-carrying agnostic of fifty years standing, a half-hearted Unitarian, got through the second and third steps.

The first step had not been difficult, especially for me who had earned a bachelor's degree in hipocrisy, that is, living by a code that held appearance to be reality, that valued conformity to the mores of the group above internal conviction, that gloried in my hero's, H. L. Menken's definition of conscience as "that still small voice that tells us someone may be watching." So I had no trouble at my initial AA meetings in following the traditional self-introduction: "My name is Ed, and I'm an alcoholic". As an honor graduate in deception, I felt no compulsion to add to myself quietly what was in my inmost recess: "But I'm not like these other characters, not really."

Their accounts of drunken behavior before they had come into AA were horrifying. They told stories with unrelenting honesty: totalling cars, beating wives and children, stealing from employers—the whole gamut of human, and even inhuman, iniquity, from misdemeanors to shocking felonies. *I* hadn't been like *that.* I developed what I later learned is an AA cliche: a list of "I nevers." My list of "I nevers" stretched from here to Princeton Junction in six-point type.

My self-deception was so polished, so slick after forty years of practice that I did not realize that I had not taken the first step *at all.* Oh, I sat there saying I was an alcoholic all right—but always with that hidden reservation.

After five years in the program, I still consider myself driving on a learner's permit. But back there in 1976, I was so innocent I didn't see that my dishonesty was setting me up for what, in AA is euphemistically called a "slip." That means I began sneaking drinks again. More than a mere "slip," my descent was that of a man on a steep icy toboggin slide, equipped with roller skates. Nothing spectacular. Nothing public. But I just couldn't stop. No more waiting for noon. My besotted brain triumphantly produced the brilliant deduction that at seven AM here it was indeed noon in London. So

let's slip a couple of jiggers of one hundred proof Vodka in the morning's black coffee. And so it went, until I got terrified. Woke up one morning with no inkling as to where I had left my car the night before. It wasn't the car I was worried about. There was at least a half-full pint of vodka tucked under the driver's seat.

So I yelled for help. My sponsor, the dear friend who had solicitously taken me to my first AA meeting, turned out to be in Mexico City. Great! But another phone call brought to my door in twenty minutes two veterans of the program. It was a Sunday afternoon and we talked for a couple of hours. The junior of the pair departed leaving me in the care of the more experienced chap. (Later I was to learn that it was standard AA procedure to make emergency calls in pairs. After all, I was an unknown newcomer and I might be chewing the carpet or craftily awaiting my visitors with a finely honed bread knife at the ready. I also learned that the rescue crew was always of the same gender as the alcoholic.)

Mr. X, as I shall call him, stayed on. I told him of my problems with Steps Two and Three. My humiliating failure with the First Step had removed my internal doubts about my own alcoholism. Mr. X, with infinite patience, kindness and understanding, led me along a path to the acceptance of the *IDEA* of a Higher Power.

When I spelled out my rejection of God, the moral shambles that had masqueraded for centuries under the banners of Christianity, the myths, the magic and the miracles as a bunch of incredible claptrap, he surprised me by nodding his head affirmatively. Obviously he had heard all this before. When I slowed down, he broke in: "OK, OK, Ed. So you can't accept God in the conventional form offered by organized religions. Right?" "Right on!" I replied.

"Let's keep this simple," he said. "Do you concede that alcohol is more powerful than you are?" I nodded. "Do you concede that AA is more powerful than alcohol?" "I guess I'll have to, "I answered. "In the few months I've been going to meetings, I've encountered enough people whom alcohol had almost killed who were well into their second decade of healthy, joyful sobriety to believe that, more often than not, AA seems to be more powerful than alcohol."

"QED, my friend," said Mr. X. "Let AA be your Higher Power. Forget about the old guy with the whiskers, the flowing robe, the insipid smile and the incandescent hair-do. Let AA take his place for a couple of years. Then you may come to believe in a personal God. That would bring you a good inner feeling, but it's not essential to keep you sober. There are only *two* MUSTS in the program. You may have to grit your teeth, sweat and suffer to meet them. Never mind those discomforts. Nothing in human experience is so bad that one drink won't make it worse. The first MUST is: don't take a drink today, just today. Remember that. Don't worry about tomorrow, or the next day. Just concentrate on one day at a time. The second MUST

is: go to meetings. Don't ever get the idea that you've got the compulsion licked. It's with you for the rest of your life."

Mr. X stuck with me. That night he took me to a meeting. And the next night. And the night after that. It worked. AA *was* my higher power. I not only took the First Step all over again. This time I did it without any reservations whatever. I still was not buying the notion that God had anything to do with my sobriety or my daily life, and I stood resolutely silent at the close of each AA meeting as my fellow-members recited the "Lord's Prayer" in unison. I had done well in my training in hypocrisy, but I hadn't made Phi Beta Kappa. That was OK with the group. AA is wise enough not only to permit, but to encourage, each aspirant to sobriety to proceed at his own pace and in his or her own way.

And so it went for a couple of years, just as Mr. X had predicted. Twice in that period he gently inquired if I felt ready for the Second Step. Both times I turned on him what my late wife used to call my "poached egg eyes" look. He'd grin and say, "Take your time."

Then some heavy blows fell on me in quick succession. I shall not burden you with the grim details except to mention that ten days after an emotionally draining departure from the home I had built and on which I had bestowed twenty-nine years of tender loving care, I returned to our new home from an AA meeting one evening to find my late wife paralyzed with a brain tumor. Had my only crutch at that time been alcohol, I probably would have predeceased her. But I had a real support system to get me through the tortured days that became weeks and then months.

I can't tell you exactly when it happened or how it happened. But sometime in the Spring of '78, on a sudden impulse, I found myself joining the group in reciting the "Lord's Prayer." It felt good. But I not only recited the familiar words. I found myself listening to the words and groping to comprehend them. One phrase gave me pause: "Thy will be done." "Wow," I thought to myself, "That's a hefty stack of chips to shove out there on the table. Especially since I haven't identified 'Thy.' What's the 'will' of Him, Her or It? How do I know whether or not I'll like it? What about *my* will? What's to be done about that?"

Here Reinhold Niebuhr's lines, also a traditional part of each AA meeting, came to my aid: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

I had been comfortable with AA as my "Higher Power." The big AA book tells me I can accept God, *as I understand him.* At last, I was ready to accept that. That very night I did something so foreign to me I was embarrassed. I knelt by my bed and offered thanks to God for my sobriety and for the strength I was getting from some source to endure witnessing the decline of the body and the mind of

WE WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU IF YOU WOULD FILL OUT AND RETURN TO US THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE POSTAGE PAID ENVELOPE INSERTED IN THIS BOOK. YOUR RESPONSE WILL HELP US TO SERVE YOU MORE EFFECTIVELY.

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How much would you be willing to pay for a year of FIP? $ _____

Janet. I've done that every night since.

In case my contemporaries in this assembly are mistrusting their hearing aids, let me repeat: I pray every night of my life and my wife Isabelle joins me. We confine our prayer to expressions of thanks to our Higher Power, whom we choose to call God, and to a daily commitment to extend a helping hand, both moral and morale support to those subject to the suffering this life of ours can inflict. We *never, never* ask Him, Her or It for anything. One doesn't, in our book at least, treat God as a bell-hop. We just say "Thank you, God, " for this day.

My AA buddies, most of whom—even in this small community—I know by their first names only—supported me through the final weeks prior to Janet's ultimate release, and only two seemed to take notice that my comments at group discussion sessions were swinging away from my open agnosticism and that I had begun attending regular meetings devoted to study and analysis of the Twelve Steps. Now I realized I was ready for Steps Two and Three. I gulped them avidly. Mr. X was mildly pleased and not at all surprised.

But for me. What a transformation! I had come to realize that the application of one's intellect blocked off any approach to faith in a Higher Power. All my formal education, and the decades of omniverous reading on my own, had created a conviction that any proposition, any theory, any thesis that can not be proved without a shadow of doubt had to be false and therefore rejected. Intellectual probity was the be-all and the end-all. I had simply overlooked one simple factor of the human condition: that most of our behavior patterns are established not by our intellects but by our emotions, not in our brains but in our guts. It's OK to listen to one's feelings, to believe in a divinity without bobbing about with rituals, hocus-pocus, mumbo-jumbo and all the trappings that fallible men had created to protect their own closed shops, and exclude all others.

Please do not misunderstand me. I'm not "born again." I'm not safe in the arms of Jesus. My purpose in this somewhat mawkish, terribly truncated account is to make just two points. First we have some twenty-five million alcoholics in our country and at least twice that number in the so-called "developed" nations overseas. Fewer than five percent of these unfortunates are even aware that they are ill. Second, Alcoholics Anonymous leads some seventy-five percent of those who are willing to work its steps to recovery and to productive, constructive lives again. It goes far beyond sobering up hopeless drunks. It leads men and women to faith in a Higher Power, respect for themselves again, solicitude for all who suffer and genuine love for all mankind. *That,* I do believe, is the highest power of all.

* * *

*A priestly physician tells us about his practice of medicine and the spiritual life.*

# THE OPEN WAY: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. WILLIAM F. HAYNES

*FIP: Would you tell us about your childlhood religious training?*

Dr. HAYNES: My grandfather and his father were ministers in the Boston area, but my mother influenced me the most. She taught me to write down problems in a letter, then give it to God. She used to put the letter in the Bible, or a desk drawer. It is wonderful to go back many months or even years later, open the letters, and see what wondrous work the Lord has done in one's life. I still do this several times a year. It's like mailing a prayer to the Lord. We must also not forget to "sing his praises", when these many miracles unfold in our life.

When I was almost 13 years old, my father died. Being an only child, I started reading with my mother a well known religious periodical consisting merely of a daily message and a scripture writing. I continued this well into my adult life right up to the present, usually in the morning before breakfast.

*FIP: Is your faith different now from what it was in adolescence?*

DR. HAYNES: Oh, yes, enormously. It's totally changed. Ever since 1980. Everything changed since then, my relationships, the way I practice medicine. Everything!

*FIP: Do you recall any spiritual experiences from childhood and adolescence?*

DR. HAYNES: Yes. There was no money for my education. I was fortunate to get a scholarship for my high school years to Newark Academy. The Lord answered our prayers and I was then able to get two scholarships plus a job waiting on tables at Princeton University. With further prayers, a friend loaned me money for medical school at Columbia. We prayed for a good internship and residency, which also fell in line. Always the Lord was there, always the prayers were affirmations, thanking God for whatever would be best, long before there was any visable sign of this coming about.
I've experienced the wonder of the Lord at sea while in the Navy, on the top deck during starlit nights; the beauty of the world, also, during many North Atlantic crossings on ships in the winter, I sensed the inability of us humans to "control" our environment. In the same vein, the serenity and peace of the woods and mountains have always had a strong spiritual impact on me and, I believe, on my children. I bought an old house twenty-five years ago in the hill of Pennsylvania which still serves as a retreat for family, friends and clergy.

*FIP: 1980 is when you were divorced?*

DR. HAYNES: No. 1980 was when I first learned that my ex-wife wanted a divorce. The pain started then; the divorce followed not too long afterwards. Sometimes the Lord will let us suffer great pain in order to be more open, more empathetic. This pain often has to do with relationships, e.g. sudden death of a loved one, or unexpected loss of family, home, income, etc., through divorce.

*FIP: Do you think of yourself as "reborn?"*

DR. HAYNES: Absolutely! During the 2 years prior to 1980,

a lot was happening to me, preparing me. Without understanding why, I kept reading books about the Holy Spirit. Even though I was terribly busy with my practice, family, teenagers, and preparing for my cardiology exams, I kept reading books about the Holy Spirit, as though I were thirsting for this kind of knowledge. I have a library of over 300 of these books. And I met Sister Miriam Murphy at this time. I would have a meeting with her over lunch every Monday at her apartment and talk about God and prayer. She has had a tremendous impact on my life, as a friend, prayer partner, spiritual guide for books, meetings, retreats. We have been together on a number of panels on spiritual healing at Princeton Seminary.

Many other clergy of different traditions both in New Jersey as well as out of state have all had enormous impacts on my journey, especially Reverend Jesse Owens. I very much appreciate the prayers of the clergy; how important they are for healing the healers. But the clergy burn out also, and need prayers, and we have to pray for them. The day will hopefully come when there will be "to and fro" prayers flowing between physicians, clergy, and lay people in all combinations. We are all disciples. These people taught me to really pray, and that there are many ways to pray. I recall one amusing episode while attending a charismatic conference for physicians. We were engaged in group prayer, and I sensed strong tremors in the hand of the priest next to me, who was a healer. Later, I told someone in the group that when I felt the tremors I prayed for this healer's palsy. She told me that he did not have any palsy; it was the healing energy which flowed through him that made him shake. This was good for a few laughs. We are all on our individual journeys, everyone is at a different spot, and spiritual needs may differ. At times, I need to join a service of praise with arms stretched upward, a joy of our Christian heritage; other times are for the eucharist, meditation, or prayer.

*FIP: Do you consider yourself to be Charismatic?*

DR. HAYNES: I don't like labels. I think that "Charismatic" has come to connote something negative. I've never thought about it as it pertains to me. I think generally a Charismatic person is one who speaks from the heart rather than the head. What he or she says is also conveyed to the hearts of those who are present. A heart to heart or spirit to spirit relationship has developed.

*FIP: Would you tell us about 1980 now, what happened, and how you have changed.*

DR. HAYNES: Yes, it had to do with my divorce. There were months of total darkness. I was devastated, knocked to my knees. It was a real experience of the cross. After having a family life for twenty years with three children and a home, to suddenly drop your children off at your old home and go back to a dark apartment by yourself is a real growth experience. I can relate to many of my patients who have undergone similar experiences. I have no difficulty sharing the darkness and ultimate light in my life with others if I think it would help them. No one has better credentials than a fellow-survivor.

*FIP: Did you lose your faith during those hard months?*

DR. HAYNES: No! Not at all. I kept praying that I would see the Lord's purpose. I prayed and made retreats, and just waited for the light to return. I always knew the Lord was with me. And people were so good to me. I remember at Thanksgiving when Jesse Owens ran down the street after me to find out if I had a place to go for Thanksgiving. A male friend would call daily from his business in New York to see how I was. When I thanked him and asked why a busy executive would call daily, he gave me a touching answer: "because I love you."

*FIP: Do you remember some of the authors whom you read?*

DR. HAYNES: Yes, Francis MacNutt, Katherine Kulman, Agnes Sanford, Henry Nouwen, George Maloney, Thomas Merton.

*FIP: How is your life different now because of the rebirth experience?*

DR. HAYNES: My life has changed radically. My practice, personal life have taken on a more spiritual dimension. I'm more conscious of the Lord's power to help me and to help others. I'm keenly aware that we are all disciples and all have different abilities and gifts and that we are to use our gifts to help others and thus glorify our Lord. Time flies; we have so little time here on earth to do His Will. Sometimes the Lord lets things happen to shake us up, make us be more humble, and cause us to use some of our latent gifts for helping our fellow men and women. Others can recognize and use all the gifts given them by the Holy Spirit, they are filled with God's grace and seem to come by it without any travail at all.

With discernment, I now am able to pray with patients and friends; although not everyone wants or needs to be prayed with. One cannot "steamroller" people with prayers when they don't apparently desire or need it. That's where discernment comes in.

*FIP: You've opened up.*

DR. HAYNES: Yes. You know how many of us have been "zipped up" Christians. It's very hard to unzip. It makes you vulnerable.

It was not easy for me to get the confidence to pray with someone. The first stage for me was to tell patients that I prayed for them when they were sick. This was when they were being discharged from the hospital. The next stage was to relate that I was praying at home every night while they were still in the hospital. The final stage, (which took great courage for me), was to ask whether we could pray right now together at the bedside. It took many months for me to get to this last stage.

*FIP: Would you tell us about the outcome of your prayer with patients?*

DR. HAYNES: Yes. There are many "miracles", some large, many small. For example, a lady had a heart attack, was in shock, required a pacemaker, and was comatose. Before writing a "no code" order, I asked the son and daughter if they would be willing to pray. They were eager to. The woman woke up, and she was able to converse for twelve hours, a time of love and reconciliation with her two children, before expiring twelve hours later.

Also, I have an alcoholic patient who had had multiple hospitalizations for alcoholism. Nothing seemed to help him. After each release from the hospital, he would go right back to drinking. He had the usual medical treatments, and psychiatric help over the years. He felt he was a "reject." A few years ago, I had an urge to ask him if we could pray a prayer of affirmation, i.e., express in prayer what a wonderful person and child of God he was. He cried and sighed, smiled, seemed to have a burden lifted away, and has not had any alcohol since then. It was not until his spiritual side had been touched that he could be healed. The psychological and physical treatments had not been successful. This, of course, is probably why A.A. has overall been so successful for many people.

* * * * *

# PRAYERS

We would like to share with you this prayer written by Reuben L. Musey, a member of our Board of Trustees, and read by him at a recent meeting of our Fellowship.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, we ask Your answer to our prayer this morning for Fellowship in Prayer.

Guidance from You is needed for the advancement of the work of our organization.

Let us all have true convictions for the Fellowship.

The choice before us is plain. The time is NOW, when our duties and responsibilities on these committees need Your help to set us on the pathway needed if we are to set the example "FOR A WORLD UNITED IN PRAYER."

Our future depends upon our accepting and demonstrating by deeds and actions the goals and ideals of our co-founders and co-founder, Mr. Carl A. Evans and Miss Kathryn G. Brown.

May we reason — TOGETHER.

We earnestly seek Your judgment. Amen.

These words express our deep belief at Fellowship in Prayer that personalities, culture, and the world itself can be transformed by faith and love.

MEDITATION

## TRANSFORMATION

We have all seen beautiful flames arise from dead, dried logs. We each have a memory of that flashing instant when a single spark makes light come forth from darkness and warmth from cold.

The Spirit of God breaks into our life and into history in just the same way. To change us from A to Z, from nothing to everything. To bring positives out of negatives, resolutions out of conflict, peace out of pain. Our hidden attitudes turn inside out, exclusive relationships open out to let unwanted people in, scars received from angry hands are converted into compassion for the angry and strength to love. Out potential for transformation is infinite, since our growth is grounded in God, who is infinite. This does not mean that we can expect to become as perfectly good, pure, loving as God. It means that we can move gently in that direction, draw closer to God, nearer to the Source of All That Is, one tiny step at a time, one loving act at a time. This is why Gregory of Nyssa taught that "Progress is Perfection": God asks no more of us than that we follow slowly The Way of Love, the path on which all things flow out from God and go back to God. We await a day when God will be All in All, when suffering comes to an end, and we know as we are known, purified, perfected, united with absolute Beauty and Truth. That day may be far away, beyond our vision, outside our reach, but it radiates hope, an inspiring hope that like a star attracts our eyes and guides us along the path of personal change. The path that goes to God in God, one moment at a time.

The golden coin of patience and gradual change has another side, the side of restlessness: if the absolute can never be attained, then there is no limit to our restlessness. Our hearts long endlessly for rest in God. Signs of our yearning are visible every day. The simplest irritation is so clear a sign of this restlessness. When we encounter anger, we ought to recall that underneath anger is fear, under fear a longing, under longing our need for God: a final, ultimate need that no earthly good will ever fill, that alone the Absolute can satisfy.

Authorities on the spiritual life have over and over again mapped stages of personal growth, the pathways on which we change as we approach and come closer to God. Charting the voyage, they have tended to agree that radical transformation takes great quantities of time filled with willingness, grace, and self-exertion, while an opaque desire to better oneself, like the wish to reform, accomplishes little at all. We have understood since Freud why the road to despair

is paved with good intentions, why wishes must be aligned with the will of God and expressed as acts of love. Wishes have the ego as their goal, while the intentions of the spirit incline toward God. Our will is directed to self, or it is "uplifted to God and drenched in love," as Ruysbroeck wrote.

For Jung, it was enough to develop the self. The goal of all transformation, the purpose of life, lay in finding one's hidden, greater self, in becoming the most man possible, the most woman possible. But for people who know the living God, this is not enough. Self-knowledge is a station on the way, not a destination. Self-love is a passageway, not a finish-line. The Way of Love does go inward for a time, through darkened pieces of the self to brighter ones, and onward to our "inmost self". But it moves further on, much further on, beyond our private horizons, beyond all self-concern, on toward the Holy One. St. Augustine, who knew the happiness of too much self, said often to his community, "you are what you love": we grow fuller and fuller of self, or we become more and more like God.

Bernard of Clairvaux, eight centuries ago, charted the course of transformation in terms of love. To grow meant to undertake four grand transitions, four passageways which everyone, in response to grace, can navigate. In the first of them, our natural love for self, our narcissistic slant, turns into a higher, spiritual love. Grace converts the instinctual dynamics that drive us toward self into a drive toward God. This sets us free to care about other people, all people everywhere. In the second stage, we learn to love God for what God gives. The warmth we receive in prayer, the energy, the joy, peace, solace, the knowledge of things invisible: these motivate us to respond to God's love with our own. Once we begin to accept the gifts of God, even a person with a heart of stone "melts down in gratitude at last." In the third transition, we begin to love God for God's own sake, to love with our whole heart and soul and strength, just because it is right, a duty, God's will. Who freely has received will freely give. Then finally, in the last, the hardest, most rapturous passage of all, grace enables us to love even ourself for only the sake of God. What we saw as reprehensible, our shadow, our fault: even that will be forgiven, even that we can love, since in God all things are possible.

There are countless maps of the spirit's growth. All begin and end in a similar place. At the furthest reach of our crossing, where we started out, where The Beyond that was always in our midst has clearly come into view, can finally be touched, the journey completes its course. Transformation comes to an end.

MFG

# ALL THAT EXISTS IS SPIRIT

*by*

*Valerie Condon*

"All that exists is spirit, before, now, and forever more." If Bob Dylan is right, the spirit who created and sustains the universe, exists in every aspect of what we see, know, or experience, regardless of our names for better and worse. The divine spirit exists in the desk under my paper, in the paper itself, in my hand, mind, and eyes guiding this pen. If Dylan is right, there is no final separation of spirit and matter, nor are the distinctions we make between the physical and heavenly orders true. The distinctions are matters of perspective: our own.

Suppose Thomas Aquinas was wrong, and God *is* the substance or spirit of all things, and their good, beauty, or perfection squares with our capacity to perceive these qualities. Suppose Dylan is telling the truth. This means it is possible to see and so find God in all there is; through history, and at those times we choose to be healed of the blindness that darkens our vision of the present and future.

The healing begins with prayer....

Remember in the beginning there was light. This is the light surrounding us when we enter into prayer, a light that unifies us with the spirit whose substance gave form to the objects in our midst, and whose power shapes the images of the contemplative state. The light of God — a light physicists call energy — illumines those images, enables us to see the things we ask for and about, in such a way as to clear our minds of negations blocking or inhibiting that energy.

Once the way is cleared, we become open to the divine assistance the light draws to it. See this light beginning prayer; a golden white, shimmering light cascading around and through you. Speaking, affirm that you are calling on the help of God's light in keeping with the aim and purpose of your being. God *is* light; knowing God begins with knowing God's substance.

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*Valerie Condon resides in Princeton and is currently writing a book on spiritual development for the "unchurched."*

When established in the light, you might call up images of those things you wish to pray about specifically. If it is a healing, see the perfection of health already accomplished in the person for whom you pray, whether yourself or another. Send light to the one being healed, as if channeled through you by God. This releases the personality or ego from the task and results that are indeed God's doing. Affirm the healing, giving thanks and praise, which accelerate the activity of the spirit. And affirm God as *life,* placing the healing in the hands of the Divine, and trusting your vision to be guided in future times when necessary to complete your part in the prayer.

Here you will come to know God as the source of all that lives, for in the work of healing, you will find yourself experiencing the world about you as a living creation. Your gaze will transform even the so-called inanimate object, in the same way an artist's rendering of a still life transforms and makes beautiful an ensemble of ordinary things.

To know God as *love* is to empower prayer with the highest state of consciousness. If you enter into the light with the intention of love, you become invincible to any doubt, worry, or darkness that may assail your field of vision. As Paul the Apostle knew, love is a great healer of the interior self; it cultivates a disposition most harmonious with the Divine Self, and creates within a wisdom capable of blessing even the darkness, the enemy, the fear. Herein is the power to undo these appearances of evil. Herein is the power to send them back to God to be readjusted in the Creator's light. When you contact and image God as love, see yourself and the conditions for which you pray bathed in a light the color of the sky at sunrise: the radiant red, rose, and golden light of new beginnings.

Every beginning in God has its origin in truth, for God is *truth.* The author of the Book of John wrote the truth shall set you free. Free from what? Perhaps that which separates, oppresses, or deceives; to be freed from greed, envy, falsehood, strife, disease, and hatred is to be free to choose truth. At the outset of any effort to contact God, ask for truth, and the guidance that attends all that is true will make itself known to you. If for example you seek to root out the unknown cause of a problem, declare God as truth and acknowledge the cause as an opportunity to engage yourself in prayer. If you discover the cause to be a hidden strife, bless it, and give thanks for the remedial work your prayer sets into action. All that is hidden is brought to light in prayer for truth; let that light be the color of sapphire, and let your prayer be answered in the days of freedom that follow your work.

At times the work may seem beyond your reach or ability. You may confront obstacles appearing to be boundless — although these too are opportunities to contact God, as *soul.* In prayer, sit very still and imagine the soul of God. What do you see? Do you see the kingdom

as Jesus compared it to a grain of mustard, grown to a tree nesting birds of the air? Do you see a few fish and loaves made to feed five thousand? Or do you see the house that wisdom built, or the lillies clothed more radiantly than Solomon? The soul of God created those things we call miracles, those ordinary things whose substance can never be truly separated from their Maker.

When you must bring into being a result that seems impossible, contact God as soul and know that nothing can impede the work your prayer sets into motion, for God is the very substance of the thing for which you pray. However, bear in mind that exacting a definition of a result limits your contact. God's activity is without limit, and often manifests in ways greater or other than those expected. Think of God as *intelligence* as you pray, faithful that the outcome will realize the greatest good possible. Surrender the realization to God, who loves surprises. Miraculous surprises.

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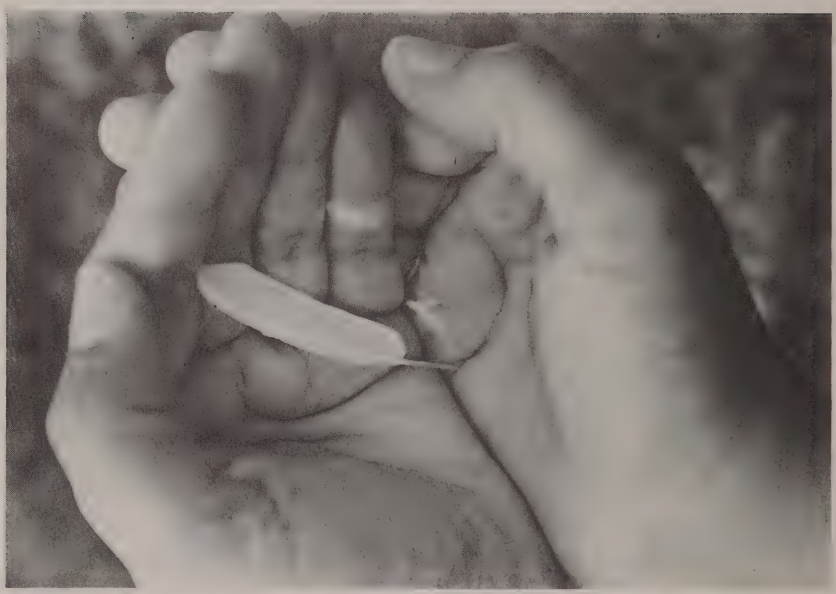
## A POEM BY HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

And fire has flame and is praise for God,
And the wind moves the flame and is praise for God,
And in the voice is the Word, and it is praise for God,
And the Word is heard and is praise for God,
Thus is all creation praise for God.

## "A TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCE"



# EAGLE'S WINGS

*By Roger Vanden Busch*

*It is said that when Kierkegaard died, his face was transfused with a smile of joy and shone with light. The profoundly moving story which follows reminds us that many people are granted the grace of a beautiful death, while those who share with them this ultimate moment of holiness grow and come closer to God.*

Recently, a student in my "Introductions to the Bible" class died of cancer. She was a quiet, gentle and courageous woman of faith. She touched me deeply, and changed my life.

As part of an assignment for the class, she wrote an essay on how God's Words whispered in her ear, penetrated her heart and tickled her feet to dance. Her essay begins with the following words: "God is abounding in love, every ready to forgive. God stands by us continually to guide us in whichever path of life we choose. God is with us in our experiences of both pain and joy. God is with us and for us at all times." She loved Exodus 3.7-8 where the Lord says, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well that they are suffering. Therefore, I will come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land." For her God was a God of intimacy. When she hurt, God hurt. God was not removed from her suffering, anxiety and struggle, but was woven within the very fabric of her being. As she said, "I have placed my trust in God to help me through these times of suffering." She also claimed Exodus 19.4-5 as her very own, "...You shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine...You have seen for yourselves how I bore you up on eagle's wings." In her weaker and more painful moments, she experienced being lifted up into the loving presence of God. At times she would sink and then she would soar, but she was never abandoned by God.

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At the Mass of Resurrection, the parents, relatives and friends of this faith-filled woman gathered in tears, sorrow, joy and hope. During the communion reflection, I read her final words: "During the past few years, I have especially realized the fidelity and presence of God in my life. The development of malignant melanoma in my life has changed my relationship with God. I have undergone surgeries as well as radiation treatments as a result of this. God's presence has been shown to me through my doctors, family and friends who are all supporting me greatly through this time in my life. God has helped me maintain my positive attitude toward life regardless of my suffering. The passages from Exodus reinforce the idea that God is truly with me and for me always. The presence of God in my life has grown from experiences in which the help of others is needed. I have come to know, through personal experience, that God is with us and for us always, in both joyful and painful moments. God is strange, but wonderful, in all things." Indeed he is. Amen. Alleluia!

When I finished sharing her final, memorable words to the community gathered, tears streamed down our faces. I choked. Then I went over to her mother and father. I handed them the essay she had written in scripture class. We embraced and we cried. Silence and physical touch proclaim more than millions of words which fail to reach the depth of our faith, hope and love relationships.

Since that unforgettable moment her memory has clung to the inner rhythms of my faith life. I still see her lying in the hospital bed. She had just given up her spirit to the Father who lifted her up on eagle's wings. She was at peace. Scripture had been fulfilled. I broke down and cried and cried. Through my watery eyes, I experienced her spirit bursting forth from her diseased, empty tomb. The gospel of Luke touched my heart like a "still, quiet voice." Why do you look for the living among the dead?" Her resurrrection steps can still be heard in the deepest dimensions of this fellow pilgrim.

There is an old story about how God places his love, mercy and compassion on the top of our hearts. When we are overwhelmed, shocked and surprised by crises our hearts are cracked open causing God to tumble down into the depth of our injured hearts creating a spiritual metamorphosis. Since the death of my friend, I am not the same spiritual person. Her resurrection steps have left an imprint on my moist, sandy soul. I have become more authentic, vulnerable, in touch with my feelings and willing to leap into the darkness of risk and letting go. My ego, that security, self-centeredness and pride which eases God Out, is slowly slipping through the fingers of God. I realize more fully that life is delicate. Our friendship was a fragile membrane between life and death. God has blessed me with the gifts of tears, community, faith, prayer, and the cancerous cross of my friend called Brenda.

# Awakening Behind the Walls In An Intensive Journal Workshop

*by Charles H. Evans, II*

*Thomas Merton, the renowned Trappist monk of Gethsemane, once wrote that the real journey in life is the journey inward. In the following article, a prisoner tells us how a week of guided inner exploration uncovered his buried self and elicited a prayer for forgiveness. Unburdened of the past, he returned to his cell resolved to create his future in alignment with the will of God.*

" 'Nothing can bring you peace but yourself' wrote Emerson in his essay on Self Reliance." With these words, the Intensive Journal Workshop began. I had signed up for this workshop knowing only that I would be learning a series of written exercises best described as a system of journal keeping; more than a diary, a system for experiencing the movement of my soul and building an active inner life. With this little understanding, I entered the first day feeling that it might become the spectacular therapeutic event of my life: the great "ah-ha." It failed these expectations, but did grant me a more valuable tool: the beginning of living self-dialogue leading towards integration.

Although we were a group of men with a single counselor, it was not only a group experience, but also individual, private sanctuary. I reflected on the immediate, private sanctuary. I reflected on the immediate contents of my mind and questioned how recording stream-of-consciousness could create new insight. But after several years of being in prison, I was anxious to try anything which might help in personal growth and change.

Our first experience was in the Period Log, creating a space of time which was part of the extended now, a world of time between the past and future where we could center ourselves to begin the study

of the unfathomable. I chose the space of time created by the slamming of the gate behind me, that gate which has suddenly become the avenue of light at the end of the tunnel. Centered within this time frame, I jotted down several experiences to mark it. I found myself writing of a monastery-like place, a world of seclusion and study: the seclusion bringing pain, study, bringing hope.

We moved from this demarcation to the Twilight Imagery Log and here recorded the dominant dreams and fantasies of this period: those many imaginings of how I want it to be when I finally return to the other side; those hours of playing within my head in hope that my dreams might become realized goals. This world is founded on such imaginings, sometimes positive, sometimes negative, but always influenced by the prominent emotion of the hour. Surprisingly, my recording became a joyful experience.

With ample record of this period, we moved into the Steppingstone Log, the beginnings of personal history. Our instructions were to meditate on twelve steppingstones: those points throughout our life which in hindsight were marks of change, not necessarily life change, but definite dividing lines. The story of my life began to unfold; its cyclical nature jumping from the page as I unconsciously recorded words. Suddenly, I was the objective audiences viewing the process

of my life as it happened on a stage filled with characters who were me. Taking one of the steppingstones, I developed that period of time in the Life History Log. Again, my pen moved without help, spelling out events, emotions, persons, fears, and hopes of that part of my life. The period became alive as it never had been before; newly acquired objectivity viewed it as though through a microscope and brought forth many insights.

The journal had taken control. It was no longer inanimate; it was alive and speaking to me — shouting to me, and not of music — for the process of intense therapy had long since begun.

In the break-room after this exercise, I observed how quiet it was. The journal had gripped not only me: everyone was lost in the adventure toward self; all energy was intently watching the stage where we performed. There was no talk, hardly a smile. Something had been opened in each of our lives. A once dead conscience was awakening.

The afternoon session began with a question and answer period; few questions, much silence. The dropout rate was noticeable. This was difficult and frightening; few there are who voluntarily undergo such pain. But we who remained were thirsting for the continuing process. We could already feel a powerful new perspective growing.

"Pick a person from your life, an important person: friend, wife, father, mother; pick someone you know well enough to draw out the steppingstones of their life," the instructor said, announcing the next exercise. Instant deep thought. The Steppingstones of another person's life?!

But I am a convict; I have made a life out of not allowing anyone to come too close; I fear others, and my crime speaks of this fear; I acted out to push away, until I finally pushed myself within these walls, inside this place of separateness. But the exercise continued, I wrote the steppingstones of another and conversed with this order, a dialogue which was really with myself. The silence in the room could have been severed with a knife: the silence of hidden crying, hidden even from ourselves.

The first day of the workshop came to a close. I was learning a tool for soul searching, a tool for becoming by the study of what had evolved. *I spent the evening in prayer for the power of forgiveness.*

A crystaline sky toned in shades of orange and pink greeted me in the early morning of day two. Several of the participants were huddled around the door of the workshop building. Nervous laughter and anxious movement were observable as we waited. Although it was early and we were all still in the process of waking, there was a presence of energy not unlike that of the volcano before it erupts. We all were preparing to spill forth words creating a wholeness in our lives that had not been attempted before.

We began the day with talk about our sleeping; had anybody had a dream? If so, go to the Dream Log and record it. I used to deny hav-

ing dreams, but today was immediately busied recording the visions of the night before. The virgin white paper blessed my words like God's gentle snow falling on the jagged mountain peaks. A smooth quality was given to the harsh images of the night. Nightmares became the softness of clouds; the frightening became peaceful. I reflected again on the newly fallen snow and how it grants smoothness to the jagged peaks of the mountains out the window. The paper held no threats; I wrote on.

It was time to talk to our bodies, a conversation between other parts of ourselves working ever onward towards completeness. I wrote out the steppingstones of my body. Its life history being clearly defined: I recalled the old mark on the wall near the kitchen, the next mark years later when I concluded I was "tall," then the hour of the "spike," my tallness had led to addiction? — strange memories of which the body speaks. The pen scribbled onward. When breaktime arrived I was still writing vigorously. The conversation with my body had become another eye-opener; another can had popped up its lid.

"Write the steppingstones of a social institution, a culture, a race, etc., and dialogue with it," spoke our instructor. There was agreement on this one; we spoke to the criminal justice system. We who were once perpetrators were now the victims in the ever cyclical triangle of justice. The virgin paper again softened the barbed words spoken against the archaic system which protects society from the evil which lurks in the dark corners. Words spewed forth; the paper became a vehicle for my hostilities. The "system" became the whipping boy for my vindicated conscience, then I became the object of the hostile words. I yelled and screamed for the whole world as I levied my self-hate in words.

Thereafter came the meditation exercise. Pen in hand, placed carefully on a blank page in the Inner Wisdom Log. Eyes closed. Ears listening to an entrance meditation designed to lead to the depths of being, a journey to the untapped capacities of awareness contained latently within. Having attacked myself throughout the majority of this process, I was not to experience a deeper truth. With this new friend and mentor, the journal, in hand, I embarked on the pathway of inner wisdom quickly discovering that I was not the victim of my past but the creator of my future. My unconsciously recorded words leaped from the page: I am alive, may the ghosts of the past bury themselves, for I live only now that the future might become unburdened of the dead and its new brilliant color shine. With such simplistic statements, the workshop became the new demarcation line of my life. No great "ah-ha," just the sudden knowledge that I was truly free to choose life in lieu of the death I had known. Peace overwhelmed me. A quiet silence bubbled from within undisturbed by either the noise of the mind or its absence. I was going home.

## BOOKS WE HAVE ENJOYED

**Resurrection of Values,** by John Walchars, S.J. Crossroad Publishing, 1986, $8.95.

The celebrated retreat master looks through hopeful, compassionate eyes at the ongoing war between "everlasting values" and "questionable ideals," and believes in the triumph of the former. "As long as love survives," he writes, "we will survive. Only hate has the diabolical capacity to freeze the human soul."

Like **Voices on Fire** and **The Unfinished Mystery,** Fr. Walchar's new book pulsates with the life of the heart and the intellect, eliciting beyond interest in the subject fresh desire to sharpen convictions and live ethically. We give it our highest recommendation.

*MFG*

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**The Transforming Moment,** by James E. Loder. Harper and Row, 1981, $12.95.

Combining insights from theology, psychology, and the history of spirituality, this book presents a new model for understanding how people change. Loder describes a five-fold process through which people in conflict are led by the Creative Spirit of God to transforming intuitions that result in conflict resolution and energy release. As sublime and erudite as it is practical, **The Transforming Moment** offers a sound explanation of the way in which "convictional experiences" lead to personal growth.

*MFG*

**Basic Call to Consciousness,** Mohawk Nation, Akwesasne Notes, 1978, $5.50.

These position papers describe the point of view of the Haudenosaunee, the Iroqouis Six Nations Confederacy. In this compact volume, Iroquois consciousness of humanity's place in creation, the intimate relationship between all creatures, plants, earth and water, sun and moon, illuminates a different way of living with each other and this planet. While reading this book, I had the sensation of being given a different set of eyes through which to see the world.

*KLH*

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**Walking on Water, Reflections on Faith and Art,** by Madeleine L'Engle, Bantam Books, 1982, $2.95.

The author of such classics as **A Wrinkle in Time** and **The Wind in the Door** gives us an opportunity to "see inside" her faith through autobiographical discussions on the confluence of art, faith, and work. Madeleine L'Engle describes her struggles to listen and be faithful to the work of art coming through her as a way of being faithful to God: "...to paint a picture or to write a story or to compose a song is an incarnational activity. The artist is a servant who is willing to be a birthgiver." Faith is not just flowery experiences for this writer. Her attempt to accept her own failings but not the label "failure" contain an example for all of us who have ever made a mistake.

*KLH*

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**Being Transformed,** by Edward E. Thornton, Westminster Press, 1984, $6.95.

This book recalls the popular definition of spirituality as "prayer raised to a lifestyle." Thorton believes that transformation based in a steady, prayerful inner life "settles into lifestyle." That is to say, as prayer becomes a habitual practice, it issues in ongoing spiritual development and growth in love. Here is no grand departure from traditional Christian advice, but the perennial message is made relevant by a modern language and fresh approach.

*MFG*

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Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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